

The awakening: a selfish desire

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The Awakening by Kate Chopin portrays a character and her longing for freedom in the forms of infidelity and selfish desires. In this book the main character, Edna Pontillier is overcome by an awakening to her inner self and desires leading to a search for a freedom of sorts. This novel was written to allow Chopin to use the life Edna Pontillier to parallel her own ideas for identity, freedom and sensuality in the form of selfish desires.

In the book *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin introduces her character Edna Pontillier as a woman in a Creole catholic society who discovers an awakening within herself and attempts to pursue it. Her awakening begins on her vacation to the Grand Isle with her family and friends. Her husband Leonce, leaves and she is left without husband and begins to think. She wonders why she has such blind devotion to him and questions herself. The turning point into her full awaking happens when she walks into the water when she learns she can swim and comes out a new woman. She then begins to distance herself from her husband deciding that he doesn't fulfill her enough and flirts with other men, mainly Robert Lebrun from hence comes an infatuation and affair with him and another man named Alcee Arobin. She longs to find freedom in the love and affection of others and runs past her morals back to the child she once was. Critic C. L. Deyo from the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* authorized that, She was a derelict in a moral ocean, rightly named, while the author writes that She was still under the spell of her infatuation. (Chopin 90) trying to separate her actions from her blaming strong whims instead of her blatant selfishness.

Both author Kate Chopin and her character Edna Pontillier can be compared and contrasted by their actions. Chopin uses inspiration from her

surrounding and experiences to write this novel. The setting of this story takes place in Grand Isle, Louisiana where the author resided for some time: Like other wealthy families in the city, the Chopins' would go by boat to vacation on Grand Isle, a Creole resort in the Gulf of Mexico (katechopin. org 1). Chopin reflected the Creole heritage of that area in her characters. Both she and Edna were outsiders to the Creole culture yet found family in it. To tie into the selfish desires, both author and character were openly flirtatious with other men. According to writings on her life, Chopin was said to have had an affinity with other men seemingly to search for meaning in physical attraction like that of Edna Pontillier.

Kate Chopin's shows her opinion on the ideals of freedom in the form of sexuality and promiscuity. Through her work she shows that she believes women should feel free to embrace their sexuality instead of bottling it up. An anonymous author from the Los Angeles Sunday Times on June 25, 1899, wrote there are sentences here and there through the book that indicate the author's desire to hint her belief that her heroine had the right of the matter. She, like many feminist writers, believed in the ideas that if a man can feel free to do as he pleases so can women, yet she strays from the path of staying loyal to one's partner. Book News wrote critiqued Edna saying I never dreamed of Mrs. Pontellier making such a mess of things and working out her own damnation as she did (Culley 1). Francis Porcher, from The Mirror wrote that the awakening [absorbs] and [interests] [the reader], then [makes] one wonder, for the moment, with a little sick feeling, if all women are like [Edna].

Her story neglects to show the consequences of her actions like the children in this disarranged marriage and how her friends and family as a whole felt at her suicide. For Kate Chopin, it takes a selfish side to the idea of freedom, when she could have found freedom without hurting those around her and losing her morals. We shall be everything to each other. Nothing else shall be of any consequence. (Chopin 178) But in the end it shows how one's mind can be warped from the consequences of selfish desire and will hit the point of no return, leaving one in an endless downward spiral. This final thought can be relayed to Mademoiselle Reiz's words, The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings. It is a sad spectacle to see the weaklings bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth. (Chopin 138).